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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 004124

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FOR NEA, NEA/ELA, AND NEA/PI
NSC STAFF FOR POUNDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2015
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: RECENT EMBASSY EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY IN EGYPT

REF: A. CAIRO 4059 (NOTAL)
[B. CAIRO 4025 \(NOTAL\)](#)
[C. CAIRO 4024](#)
[D. CAIRO 3953 \(NOTAL\)](#)
[E. CAIRO 3638 \(EXDIS\)](#)
[F. CAIRO 3627 \(NOTAL\)](#)
[G. CAIRO 3493](#)

Classified by Charge Gordon Gray for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

[¶11.](#) (SBU) Embassy Cairo continued in May its robust outreach program to support the expansion of democracy and freedom in Egypt, with a particular focus on international monitors. Activities in May included the visit of the First Lady to Egypt; a grants-signing ceremony for the latest civil society recipients of the Self Help Program funds; a meeting with PM Nazif, prior to his departure for Washington; a meeting with G-7 COMs to push their support for democracy activities and a briefing for the diplomatic corps; and various other reform-oriented meetings by high-level visitors, the Charge, and Embassy officers. End summary.

Support for Civil Society

[¶12.](#) (SBU) In a public diplomacy triumph, First Lady Laura Bush visited Egypt May 23-24 and her activities included a focus on reform in Egypt, particularly in the education field. The First Lady also delivered remarks to a group of 60 prominent Egyptian women activists, from the Government, NGOs, think-tanks, academia, and the media (ref D).

[¶13.](#) (C) On the margins of the First Lady's visit, the Embassy arranged for NDI's regional representative to brief NEA PDAS Cheney on NDI planning for Egypt. Also on the margins of the First Lady's visit, PDAS Cheney delivered a strong message on the need for Arab League leadership on political reform to Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa (ref A).

[¶14.](#) (SBU) PDAS Cheney's meeting with NDI built on previous meetings that poloff--both alone and with MEPI-Tunis Regional Director Mulrean--had held several times during May with the NDI's regional representative to discuss NDI's efforts to open a Cairo office and begin substantial programming in Egypt.

[¶15.](#) (SBU) The Embassy's May 9 announcement of eight new small grants, under the auspices of the Ambassador's Self Help Program, to Egyptian community development associations received generally positive press coverage. Most media attention provided factual coverage of the details of the grants as well as the Charge's remarks, which discussed the range of USG development assistance programs in Egypt and reiterated USG support for democracy-promotion activities by civil society. A leading opposition daily, Wafd, and a tabloid weekly, Osboa, sought to use the May 9 event as evidence of continued "interference" by the USG in Egypt's internal affairs, but these criticisms did not demonstrate any staying power.

[¶16.](#) (SBU) On May 25, the Charge hosted a luncheon meeting for approximately 15 civil society activists, including MEPI grantees. In remarks to the group, the Charge underscored USG support for civil society activism in support of democracy and freedom.

Support for Broad Political Participation

[¶17.](#) (SBU) On the occasion of Senate Majority Leader Frist's May 4-6 visit to Egypt (ref G), Senator Frist attended a lunch organized by the Embassy which included a range of key Egyptian reform advocates including prominent NDP reformists Hossam Badravy and Mohammed Kamal, Wafd Party leaders Mahmoud Abaza and Mounir Abdel Nour, leading liberal intellectuals

Osama Ghazaly Harb and Hala Mostafa, and Ghad Party Secretary-General Mona Makram Ebeid. The diverse guest list

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stimulated lively conversation and debate over the state of Egypt's political reform and prospects for the future. Senator Frist encouraged the guests to press forward with an Egyptian-designed and Egyptian-driven reform process, and affirmed U.S. interest in providing support, political and material, toward achieving real progress. Senator Frist, accompanied by the Charge, also met with Ghad Party leader Ayman Nour the same day to signal support for a free and fair campaign.

¶18. (C) On May 11, the Charge and ECPO Counselor met with Shafiq Gabr, a prominent business leader with close ties to the reformist wing of the NDP (ref F). In response to Gabr's defense of the proposed new rules for direct presidential elections (which were passed by Parliament on May 10, and later ratified in a national referendum on May 25), the Charge cautioned Gabr that the new rules would only be seen as reasonable if upcoming parliamentary elections resulted in truly diverse party representation in the People's Assembly. (Note: According to the new rules, only parties with representation of five percent or more in the People's Assembly will be able to nominate candidates for president in 2011 and beyond. These rules will not apply to the 2005 presidential elections, which will allow any registered political party to field a candidate. End note.) On May 30, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counter-terrorism Fran Townsend met with Gabr to express, inter alia, concern over the violence surrounding the May 25 referendum and press for GOE acceptance of international election monitors. We are confident that this message will be passed to key NDP decision makers.

¶19. (C) On May 17, the Charge discussed with Tarek Heggy, a pro-reform intellectual, the significance of GOE-led reform measures to date. The Charge urged Heggy to continue to use his published writings (a selection of which may be seen at www.heggy.com) to push for meaningful political reform. Heggy, who is a neighbor of EGIS Director Soliman, is well connected with senior GOE officials.

¶10. (C) On several occasions over the course of May, ECPO Counselor advised Karim Haggag, senior advisor to Gamal Mubarak, the presidential son and chairman of the NDP's Policies Committee, of the need for the GOE to demonstrate concrete additional steps on political reform. ECPO Counselor pressed for GOE acceptance of international election monitors and freedom for opposition candidates to campaign effectively. In the most recent exchange with Haggag (ref C), ECPO Counselor also pressed Haggag on reports of violence on May 25 against opposition demonstrators by regime supporters, with the apparent acquiescence of security officials.

Support for International Elections Monitors

¶11. (C) On May 12, just before PM Nazif's visit to the United States, the Charge met with the PM to preview the visit (ref E). The Charge urged Nazif to be prepared when in Washington to discuss the concrete political reform steps that the GOE is taking. In particular, the Charge pressed Nazif on the issue of international election monitors and suggested that Nazif consider how the USG could provide technical support to the GOE, for example to establish an independent election commission.

¶10. (SBU) During the May 15 meeting of G-7 Ambassadors, the Charge briefed the group on USG democracy-promotion activities in Egypt, including programs by USAID, MEPI, and DRL, and urged the G-7 countries to engage the GOE on the issue of promoting free and fair elections in Egypt, with international monitors. He followed up with the EU Ambassador on May 22 to press for greater EU activism in promoting democracy in Egypt.

¶11. (SBU) On May 26, during a briefing for the diplomatic corps on the visits of PM Nazif to Washington and First Lady Laura Bush to Egypt (ref B), the Charge exhorted the attendees to urge their governments to press Egypt to accept international monitors, as called for by President Bush during his May 7 speech in Latvia.

¶12. (SBU) During a May 30 meeting with political officers from "like-minded" embassies in Cairo (i.e., France, Norway, the UK, Germany, Italy, Australia, the Netherlands, and the EU), Poloff urged his colleagues to seize any and all opportunities to engage with the GOE on the issue of international observers/monitors of Egypt's upcoming elections.

¶13. (SBU) Finally, on May 31 the Charge used a discussion

with the members of the Egyptian Council on Foreign Relations to warn that how the GOE conducted upcoming elections would inevitably color the bilateral relationship (SEPTEL/NOTAL).

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GRAY